

George Thompson House
546 East Avenue
Rochester
Monroe County
New York

HABS No. NY-5645

HABS
NY,
28-ROCH,
19-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5645

GEORGE THOMPSON HOUSE

NY,
28-ROCH, 19-

Location: 546 East Avenue, at the northwest corner of East Avenue and Strathallan Park, Rochester, Monroe County, New York

Present Owner: 546 East Avenue Corporation, 533 University Avenue, Rochester

Present Occupant: Unoccupied

Present Use: None

Statement of Significance: This solidly built house in the Ecole style of the Neo-Grec was constructed by one of Rochester's leading contractors. It was sited facing Rochester's prestigious nineteenth century residential street, East Avenue. It was demolished in 1968.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1876-77.
2. Architect: Unknown. It is believed that Charles Coots, architect for the House of Refuge for which Thompson was the contractor, was also the architect of the house. In the cost sheet Thompson lists \$250.00 for architect fees.
3. Original and subsequent owners: "... beginning at a point at the intersection of the north line of East Avenue and the center line of Stettheimer (Strathallan) Park a distance of three hundred and eight feet; thence west a distance of two hundred feet; thence south a distance of seventy feet; thence east a distance of eighty-five feet; thence south a distance of two hundred and forty-three feet; thence east, along the north line of East Avenue a distance of one hundred and fourteen feet to the place of beginning..."
An attachment to this deed records an agreement, June 23, 1854, Book 121, p. 290, between owners of property on Stettheimer Park concerning setbacks. No house may be closer than thirty-five feet to either the east or west lines of the park, except steps or verandas. Barns or outhouses must be placed to the rear of the house and at least fifty feet from the east or west lines of the park.

- 1876 Deed, April 3, 1876, Book 293, p. 230.
From: Goodwin Stoddard and Francis M., his wife.
To: George H. Thompson.
For: \$10,400.00.
- 1876 Deed, August 23, 1876, Book 297, p. 65.
From: Hartwell C. Webster and Eliza S., his wife.
To: George H. Thompson.
For: \$2,000.00.
"... a parcel on the west side of Stettzheimer Park bounded thus: beginning at a point in the center line of Stettzheimer Park, three hundred and eight feet north from the intersection of Stettzheimer Park and the north line of East Avenue, thence west one hundred seventy feet; thence south forty feet; thence east one hundred and seventy feet; thence north forty feet to the place of beginning ..."
- 1877 Deed, April 3, 1877, Book 304, p. 136.
From: George H. Thompson and Carrie L., his wife.
To: Nathaniel B. Ellison.
For: \$20,000.00.
This is the parcel purchased by Thompson April 3, 1876.
- 1877(?) Deed, April 4, 1877, Book 307, p. 33.
From: Nathaniel B. Ellison and Mary, his wife.
To: Carrie L. Thompson.
For: \$20,000.00.
- 1919 Deed, November 20, 1919, Book 1083, p. 23.
From: Estate of Carrie L. Thompson, by George M. Thompson, administrator of the will.
To: Katherine B. Mayer.
For: \$22,000.00. (\$22.00 in stamps).
- 1948 Deed, June 14, 1948, Book 2483, p. 306.
From: Katherine B. Mayer.
To: Nora Shackelford.
For: \$1.00, etc. (\$14.30 in stamps).
- 1950 Deed, December 29, 1950, Book 2659, p. 25.
From: Nora Shackelford.
To: North Street Realty Corporation.
For: \$1.00, etc. (\$11.55 in stamps).
- 1955 Deed, April 8, 1955, Book 2956, p. 183.
From: North Street Realty Corporation.
To: Alex-Park, Inc.
For: \$1.00, etc. (\$44.50 in stamps).

An additional parcel of forty five feet by two hundred and forty three feet, located at the west side of the property is included with this transfer of title. Alex-Park, Inc. changed its name to 546 East Avenue Corporation, September 29, 1961.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Thompson is reputed to have been his own contractor. On his statement of costs, he notes that he obtained all materials at cost.
5. Original plans: Unknown.
6. Alterations and additions: The interior has been altered to accomodate several apartments.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

George Thompson (1823-1884) was a successful contractor who built the Monroe County Poor House, the Female Division of the Western House of Refuge, the Kimball Tobacco Factory, and the Rochester Trainhouse for the New York Central Railroad. He also received numerous contracts for the laying of railroad track throughout western New York as well as other railroad and municipal buildings. Thompson began this house for his bride within a year of their wedding. He and his wife adopted two children. The daughter married a Canadian businessman. The son, George M., became a prominent local physician.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deeds, Office of Monroe County Clerk.

Interview, Nora Shackleford, 1534 Monroe Avenue, Rochester, 1966.

"Statement, of cost, of George H. Thompson's Residence," copy located in the files of the Society for the Preservation of landmarks in Western New York.

b. Secondary and published sources:

McIntosh, Prof. W. H. History of Monroe County, New York. Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign and Everts, 1876.

Peck, William F. History of Rochester and Monroe County, New York. Vol. II. New York and Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Company, 1908.

_____. Landmarks of Monroe County, New York.
Boston: The Boston History Company, 1895.

Rochester City Directories. 1870-1880.

Schmidt, Carl and Ann. Architecture and Architects of Rochester, New York. Rochester: Society of Architects, 1959.

2. Likely sources not yet investigated: Municipal and corporate records of contracts with George H. Thompson.

Prepared by Kevin Patrick Harrington
Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western
New York
November 30, 1966

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The asymmetry and details characteristic of the Neo-Grec style of Richard M. Hunt and his New York atelier of the 1870's are present in this house.
2. Condition of fabric: The structure was unoccupied before its demolition in 1968.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Forty-two feet by ninety feet; asymmetrical three bay facade; three-and-one-half stories; rectangular block with tower and other asymmetrical projections.
2. Foundations: The foundations are of red Medina sandstone.
3. Wall construction: The red brick walls painted white are set with horizontal stone belt courses.
4. Structural system, framing: The masonry walls are load bearing.

5. Chimneys: Two brick exterior chimneys, one located on the east tower and one at the northwest corner, are paneled and corbeled.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are five exterior entrances. The main south entrance is set beneath a carved and bracketed stone entablature with decorative stone hood ornament. Double doors with center light have upper and lower panels set in molded frames. There are single doors off the southeast and north porches. A secondary east entrance is fitted with double doors set with single panels. There is a single-door basement entrance on the north side.
 - b. Windows: Most windows have double hung one over one light sashes. On the south facade paired windows have banded and decorated stone lintels and projecting sills. All other first and second story windows are similar, but more simply treated.
7. Roof: The compound slate covered mansard roof is finished with gabled and hipped roofs. The molded roof profiles are in some instances finished with a running ridge ornament. The prominent roof peaks are fitted with finials. The east facade roof is composed of a molded and eared gable end fitted with a decorative peak brace, a two-part gable dormer over the center entrance and a flat-roofed porch, backed by the four and one half story tower which rises above the other roof lines. It has a mansard roof topped by a hipped roof. Each level contains gabled dormers. It is topped by a finial weather vane. There are four port-hole gabled dormers in the central block. The roof is finished with a molded eave and deeply arched, bracketed stone cornice.
8. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The south entrance is reached by a six step stone stairway which is fitted with low flaring and molded stone piers. The two story porch at the southeast corner is open at the first story and glazed at the second story. The east entrance is fitted with a stone stepped stoop. A rear single story entrance porch is located at the northeast corner.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The south entrance provides access to a north-south hall which enlarges to the east at the tower. The parlor and dining room are to the west, the library to the east and the kitchen to the north. The second floor rooms are similarly arranged.
2. Stairways: The main staircase of two flights with one landing is finished with molded handrail and turned balusters and newel post. There is a single flight rear stairway in the center of the north wall, extending from the kitchen to the second floor.
3. Flooring: Narrow hardwood floors have some parquetry border patterns. The cost list states: "Wood carpet (dining room), \$45.00."
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are plaster finished with a deep plaster cornice and paneled cherry wainscot in the principal rooms. Some ceilings have plaster strapwork and central medallions. Originally some walls were frescoed and papered at a cost of \$1,000.
5. Doorways and doors: In the principal first floor rooms the large, paneled solid cherry doors are set in cherry frames with saw-toothed cresting.
6. Special decorative features: Similar cherry woodwork frames the windows which have louvred jalousies folding back into reveals. Some fireplaces have cherry surrounds, chamfered block piers and crested mantels and overmantels.
7. Hardware: Original metal door knobs have decorative crest-shaped plates.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: The original steam heating system cost \$1,122.15.
 - b. Lighting: The house was originally fitted with gas fixtures costing \$476.06.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south, overlooking Rochester's prestigious resi-

dential street, East Avenue.

2. Historic landscape design: The south property line is finished with an iron fence set between stone piers. The fence, freight on stoneposts (Waterloo), flag walks, sod and labor cost \$2,280.56.
3. Outbuildings: A two and one half story, three bay, brick carriage house, contemporary with the house, is located to the north. This structure cost \$7,000.

Prepared by J. Tisher
Society For the Pre-
servation of Land-
marks in Western New
York
November, 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project of twenty-six selections of historical and architecturally significant Rochester structures was undertaken in 1966, by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc., Mrs. Patrick Harrington, Executive Director, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, James C. Massey, Chief. The project was under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Senior Historian. Architectural and historical descriptions were contributed by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc. General photographic documentation was undertaken by Hans Padelt, Senior Engineer, Graflex, on a contractual basis with the Historic American Buildings Survey. The final documentation and editing was done by Susan R. Slade in 1978, for transmittal to the Library of Congress and the impending publication of the Historic American Buildings Survey New York State catalogue.